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MRS. KATE COLLINS THE ARTIST-DECORATOR.

BY MRS. OLIVER BELL BUNCE.



THE time was when the woman in business was an unusual thing, a marvel, and a wonder that she should so demean herself by entering an employment fitted only for men.

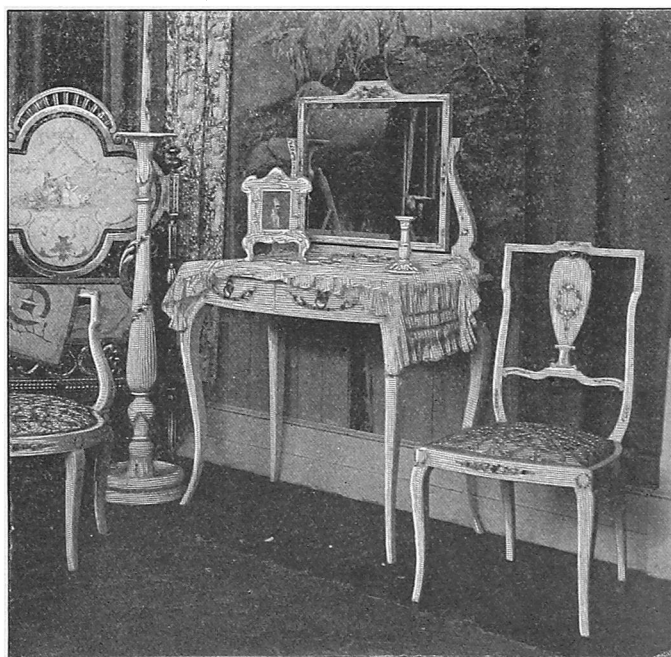
But for those souls who need the wherewithal, who depend solely on their own exertions to procure for themselves a livelihood the shop now has no terrors, and although it is a place where articles are made, where pretty fabrics are converted into accessories for rooms and the like, in many cases this same shop becomes a studio for the holding of artistic effects in the way of satins, silks and every other texture known as house decorations. This idea has been well carried out by Mrs. Kate Collins, the artist-decorator, a woman well known for her distinctive talent in clever ornamentation and a helper of social functions in the fashionable set.

Kate Collins when a little girl naturally had a decided taste for the putting together of certain materials in different colors, and so when completed, formed a decorative place in the household. In fact, she came from an artistic family so that she only brought out as she grew to womanhood the ideas that had been born within her and when a line of business was absolutely necessary she put her clever perceptions to the test and went regularly into trade. At the outset she timidly made a calendar, a pretty affair which she submitted to a publisher, and so artistic was the design that he accepted at once the first attempt of this novice in decorative specialties. At that time the Yale boys gave their yearly dance, and of course to give it in first rate style a souvenir or memento was needed for their class. It was then that Mrs. Collins was pressed into service, and so capable was she in this direction that she became after some months the designer of favors for the "smart set." Favors for the cotillions, favors for the German, favors for luncheons and dinners, and a furnisher of trifles made in excellent taste and in the best manner. Everyone knows that the woman of fashion when in town is an up-to-date creature, especially when balls, receptions, parties and the like are on the tapis. That, when the season commences her first consideration is for the introducing at her social functions some special favor, some artistic design which has not been thought of by any other woman in her set. A device which when created is hers alone and then banished forever. So a decorator is sought to aid in this plan, a woman full of artistic leanings like Mrs. Collins, who knows her business in every detail, so suggestions are made, and a line of ornamentation followed, that when finished is considered a genuine success.

Mrs. Collins has many patrons, among them are the Astors, Bradley Martins, and a host of fashionable folk, who are ladies well equipped in all directions, particularly in art matters, and are quite willing to pay for anything that is peculiarly unique and attractive.

At the Bradley Martin ball this artist decorator had full charge of the souvenirs made for that social event. For one of the favors of the German, for the gentlemen whose costumes were so widely discussed there were walking sticks in shape like an alpine, over which was an excellent coating of gold paint. On the top was a figure in china of Sèvres make of Louis the Fourteenth, in a costume of splendid tones most minutely copied in all its historical tints while some three or four inches below was a silken cord with tassels in a delicate light blue. For the queens of the occasion was an elaborate affair in which green satin and an abundance of gold formed the charming plan. Another was a tabard horn with a small banner decorated in a sort of heraldic effect made of Venetian red satin and trimmed with a fringe of gold bullion.

At a social function given by Mrs. John Jacob Astor there was designed by Mrs. Collins an immense sedan chair covered well with smilax and other tender greens. At each point was fastened innumerable bouquets of choice flowers. This magnificent decoration was brought in by the footman and deposited in the centre of the ball-room, and afterwards the flowers were distributed to each dancer. For another figure there were bannerettes made in superb effects of red and yellow satins on which were decorations that for finish and completeness could not be equalled.



ART FURNITURE DESIGNED AND MANUFACTURED BY
MRS. KATE COLLINS.

When Miss Pauline Whitney became Mrs. Paget, it was this clever artist who made the wedding cake boxes, exquisite and dainty affairs, on which were embroidered three wreaths gracefully combined, each one in different delicate colors, with raised work in gold which formed the outside decoration, and tied together by narrow white satin ribbon. On each side of the box was a conventional design in gold ornamentation and

so finished in detail that they looked like a bit of rare faience of long ago. This clever woman has made pretty devices for evening entertainments in the shape of muffs made of crêpe paper—also top hats, butterfly nets, and butterflies in all their gorgeous tints. Every conceivable plan is put forth by this untiring worker who is now acknowledged as one of the best decorators in this great city.

Mrs. Collins declares that the colors and shadings of brocade and satin are to her like beautiful music; that when she wishes an inspiration she collects about her some lace-satins, silks and the like and then waits till an idea takes possession of her, which she works out. Sometimes a whole day passes without a new device being conceived or a design formulated, but when that is accomplished the task is an easy one. Besides doing work for leaders of society here she goes to Washington to make favors for the Chevy Chase, German Embassy, and Metropolitan Club.

As one ascends the stone steps to the Collins studio, which is on one of the great thoroughfares of this big town, the window, which is a broad one, claims your attention. It is a mass of beautiful articles for house decoration. At the farther end is a curtain, and near by a chair in forest green on which rests a pillow of brilliant stripes. A little way on is a table and against it a bracket—one of the new kind which has only one small shelf for the placing of photographs. Beyond it are some silken stuffs, then a drapery, and a little further on a tulle of cream matting set off by a finishing of forest green. Over this a lace, and a number of accessories in cut glass, all in a harmony of delicate colors. From this is some four rooms, the largest being the workshop, where a number of employees are busily engaged in the embroidering of curtains, the designing of pillows, making of cushions, favors and small articles that make up a home and its atmosphere. The studio proper faces the street. It is square, with a wonderful array of objects. At one end is a couch, on which there are pillows for inspection, made in every conceivable shape, of every known material, and special ornamentation, of which Mrs. Collins's ideas were the happy thought. Odd pieces in furniture, a toilet dressing-glass with chairs to match, enameled and then painted in Dresden style. As a corner decoration there is a tall candlestick some four feet in height, in which is a candle of extra length, the whole well adorned in bold tones of rich flowery designs. Another piece well worthy of mention is a massive table elaborately carved, a splendid device of Mr. Frank Keeble, the decorative architect of the Collins studio. On this table rests a fiddle case in a highly-finished satin box, another artistic plan of this clever young Englishman. One can see special bookcases, quaint screens in burnt wood, and a host of materials scattered everywhere which could not fail to please any student who loves that great art—interior decoration.

Beyond this are two smaller rooms for the holding of finished draperies and special designs partly under way, half completed schemes which are aids to other artistic devices. Articles which have just arrived from the other side of the water, grotesque bits of Japanese ware which are to form a favor for a Newport dinner or aid in a luncheon somewhere else either in the East or West. In fact, Mrs. Collins asserts "that in the production of any piece she hardly knows herself the beauty of the design until the work is nearly completed; that her desire is always to produce a harmony, and so she rather feels her way in the making of artistic effects. To her it is a good deal like painting a picture. That to one plan a delicacy should be given, to another a broadness and strength. That each in its way should stand alone,

making for itself a completeness in every detail. That the best materials should be used in the provision for all work however simple, and that colors should be carefully chosen and wisely selected.

Mrs. Collins each season designs novelties which are not found in the market. Of course the decoration and furnishing of rooms are her special forte, yet there are numberless bits of artistic additions which naturally grow out of a business like hers. This season it is the photograph rail or shelf, merely of different sizes made of pure white wood, remarkably simple in form, in some two or three artistic curves. This affair is undeniably plain when not ornamented. But by the



A CORNER OF MRS. COLLINS'S STUDIO.

aid of a brush and a little water color there is a background given in the way of a pastoral scene—a horse racing or bit of flower garniture which makes this simple novelty a beautiful focus as a corner ornamentation. Others there are in a fine grain of mahogany, highly polished and bordered with a lighter wood, which has much the appearance of a fine marquetry. Pillows whose top covers represent the fruits of the season in all their natural colors. There are screens in leather, ornamented by burnt work. On the middle panel is an early French design of a peasant dressed in the time of 1730. On the other two, are strong conventional plans of a most artistic character. At one time a mantel covering was desired by a patron of wealth. It being needed for an old-fashioned marble shelf, a means had to be devised. From the ceiling on a brass pole was hung a red satin curtain, here and there cleverly outlined. For the shelf a board was covered with the same red tints, which had for a finishing touch a small brass pole. From this hung a deep curtain that reached to the floor, embroidered like the one over the shelf and trimmed with crescents which hung in graceful rows on each side. This affair caused much comment among people who saw it for the first time.

Some weeks ago a council was held and a plan formed for the decorating of the fine yacht belonging to Mr. Percy Chubb. With the usual taste of the Collins shop there were a number of materials gathered together and an arranging of decorations was commenced. In the main saloon was a floor covering of deep red velvet carpet, almost solid in color. On the walls was a cretonne whose background was a light cream, in which a delicate green leaf and large conventional flowers formed for this place a very attractive scheme. For the

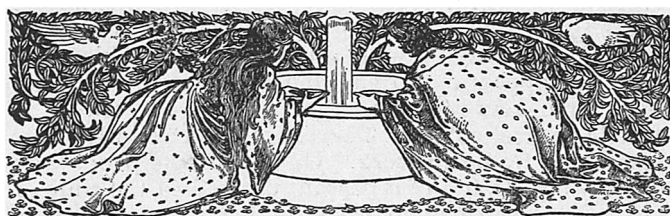
cushions there was a tapestry in wood colors, in which dark red leaves and a quaint design in pattern was the excellent plan. In this room there was a balancing table so well weighted that whichever way the ship turned it was always level.

In Mrs. Chubb's stateroom there was for the floor a carpet of splendid warm blue in which there was only a blending of these tints. As a wall covering there were leaf effects in delicate green set off by a yellow narcissus. These lovely hues were on a background of charming blue, while the cushions were in a tone of very light old rose. This combination, as an artistic effect, was peculiarly suitable for a lady's stateroom. The guest cabin was in another blue, but darker in tones of bluish green, and here and there a branch of small yellow blossoms. The cushions for the chart room were in a pattern of pomegranates of very dark reds, blues, and splendid browns. A heavy material in silk and wool that would stand the sea air and the ocean spray.

There is one thing to be said about Mrs. Collins that the rooms she furnishes have at least a livable atmosphere. They look as if they have been lived in, and are not places where a lot of artistic furniture has been set down and in which there is a great deal of show but very little comfort.

Mrs. Collins is a fine distinguished looking woman well built, with large dark expressive eyes, and a manner that is womanly in speech and agreeable.

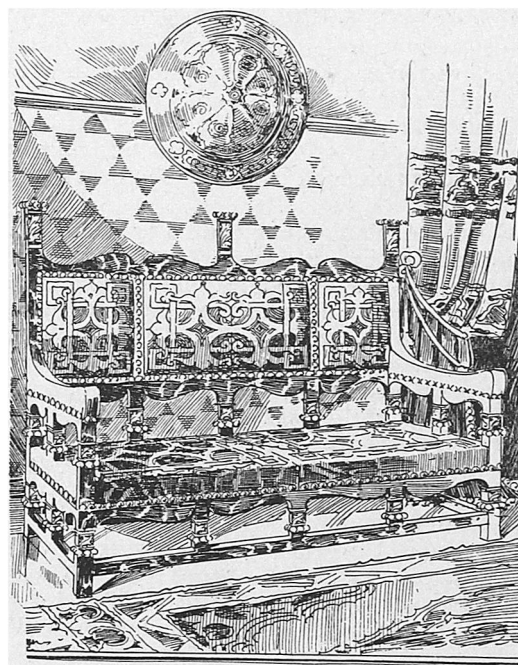
When asked about her work she will tell you she is never satisfied with herself, that there is much to be acquired before one really knows the art of interior decoration. She believes that women are as good in lines of business as men. And above all they have one quality which ensures for them many successes and that is a steadfastness of purpose, which never fails when a necessity is to be made. This clever woman also asserts "that simplicity in form is one of the true laws in decoration. That all principles in colors should be treated like those given by the able artist who understands the mixing of tints and blending of hues."



DECORATIVE NOTES.

A VERY dainty room in a simple cottage may be designed with ingrain paper in plain shades, mistletoe green or rose amber. A frieze nine inches deep decorated in a cretonne of the same color with silver or gold relief completes the wall. The ceiling may then be tinted a lighter tone of the wall color without further decoration.

A COMPOSITION for imitation of ivory, for decorative purposes, is made by gently boiling half an ounce of isinglass in a half pint of water till dissolved, then straining and adding flake white (basic nitrate of bismuth and a very little Naples yellow, oxide of lead and antimony). This is to be mixed with rice water and starch powder. Add to the work a final coat, and rub this with fine sandpaper to take off the gloss.



ARTISTIC HALL FURNISHINGS.

THE plan adopted in India and many tropical countries for cooling water and food—the use of damp cloths wrapped about a porous jar, or of an inverted flower pot—is now and then mentioned as a system that could be adopted with profit in this country. We would gladly avail ourselves of so simple a system of refrigeration were it possible, but unfortunately it is not. The reason that it is not is that there is not enough difference here between the dew point and the actual temperature of the air. In a dry climate, with a dew point thirty or forty degrees Fahr., effective cooling is in this way possible. The degree of cooling is indicated where water begins to be seen as dew on the outside of the vessel or glass containing it. In the eastern portion of the United States the amount of cooling that can be effected by evaporation is insignificant, in some cases only a few degrees.

LILAC is a difficult color to handle; it needs much pale yellow ochre and silver, and a very little crimson orange to make it amenable to decorative use. A self-colored paper or silk of warm yellow ochre, is uncommon and agreeable, but pale old rose or gobelin blue are more charming, but at the same time are more commonplace.

ON THE highest sanitary as well as on æsthetic grounds, suitably finished floors and rugs are to be preferred to heavy carpets to cover the floors. Where the floor is not adapted to rugs alone, a good quality of matting should be laid over the floor.

IN THE selection of rugs for the floor there is abundant opportunity for selection. Only those should be chosen which are light enough to be easily removed and beaten, but are yet heavy enough to lie on the floor. No Oriental rug should be shaken or whipped on a line. It should be laid on the grass and beaten with rattan beaters that come for the purpose. Rugs in a room in regular use should be cleaned in this way every week.